



Assemblymember John Laird

Assembly Budget Committee Chair

eNews Update



27th Assembly District

May 20, 2005

Budget Update

The annual process of crafting a new state budget began earlier this year than any time in recent memory. We took hearings on the road across California, traveling nearly 4,000 miles to hear from Californians on the budget's effect on education, transportation and seniors.

Last Friday, Governor Schwarzenegger presented his highly anticipated May Revise Budget. I was pleased he moved toward the State Assembly by dumping his plan for no transportation projects for the next year, and by lowering the borrowing in the budget from the original \$6 billion he proposed. But he fell short on making good his previous promise to restore education funding and did not restore his cuts to seniors—and he left a \$5 billion problem in next year's budget.

Earlier this week, the non-partisan Legislative Analyst stated that the Governor's revised budget overestimated new revenue by \$600 million. Coupled with two proposals that probably would not survive legal or negotiation hurdles—that left \$1.5 billion in proposals in the Governor's budget that quite likely will never be realized, a hole that must be filled as the first priority in our budget review.

Assembly Budget Subcommittees have been moving through a grueling schedule of more than twenty hearings this week. Through these hearings, the major components of the budget are crafted and positioned for final negotiation and vote.

On June 1st, I expect to convene the Joint Legislative Conference Committee. The Conference Committee will take the budgets prepared by Assembly and Senate budget subcommittees and integrate them into one budget that can be sent to the Governor by the June 15 legislative deadline. We will work to narrow the deficit, restore funding to education, and eliminate those budget proposals that are not financially sound – and work to lower the deficit left for next year.

For more on the Governor's May Revise and the Legislative Analyst's report, click here <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a27/budget.htm>.

Superintendent O'Connell's Visit to Santa Cruz County

Jack O'Connell, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, joined me in hosting an education town hall in Aptos, April 23rd. Mr. O'Connell and I heard from over 100 teachers, parents, administrators and community members concerned about per-pupil funding, the Governor's proposed budget and a variety of other critical education issues.

Hunger Fighter Award

I am honored to have been awarded a "Hunger Fighter Award" by the California Hunger Action Coalition for authoring AB 1385, The Food for Schoolchildren Act of 2005. The bill, which has bi-partisan support, will make it easier for families to enroll students for school meals. It will also reduce paperwork and save money for school districts. The bill passed the Assembly Education Committee and is now before the Appropriations Committee.

Special Election?

By June 13th, the Governor must decide if he will call a special election for this fall—his public statements indicate he intends to do it. As Budget Chair, I have serious concerns about how to pay for it. Since the Governor did not include funds for a special election in his May Revised Budget, I've called on the Governor to detail his budget for the special election.

Counties still haven't been reimbursed for the Recall Election that brought the Governor into office. And Secretary of State McPherson this week stated special election costs will be about \$80 million - \$10 million more than the previous estimate. For cash-strapped counties focused on public safety, education and services for seniors and disabled persons, shouldering the Governor's \$80 million is unacceptable.

Support Health Services for Community College Students

We have a unique opportunity to support health care services for community college students across California. The current health fee exemption for Board of Governors (BOG) fee waiver students creates an ironic and unfair situation for community colleges. The health fees that are waived are not backfilled in the budget in any way. As a result, colleges—like Cabrillo College—that serve larger numbers of low-income students have less revenue available for health services.

I have authored a bill, AB 982, that addresses this issue by removing the provision in the law that exempts students who receive BOG fee waivers from paying a campus health center fee.

To learn more, click here to read my op-ed that appeared in the *Cabrillo Voice*:
<http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a27/oped/a272005003.htm>

Legislation Update

It's crunch time in the Assembly as the deadline to move legislation to the Senate is June 3rd. I introduced 20 bills this year and am pleased nine bills have already moved on to the Senate for consideration, including:

- Community College Health Service Protection—AB 982
- Santa Cruz County First-time Homebuyers Program—AB 983
- Sierra Conservancy Technical Update—AB 1201
- Military Base Realignment & Closure (BRAC)—AB 1202
- Dental Anesthesia Safety—AB 1384
- Civil Rights Act of 2005—AB 1400
- Affordable Housing and Water on the Monterey Peninsula—AB 1421
- State Mandates Reform—AB 1467
- Assisting New City Formation—AB 1602

For a complete bill list, click here
<http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a27/legis0506.htm>.

John in the District
5/21 – CTA/NEA Santa Clara County Service Center Council, San Jose

5/21 – Annual Alliance for Children Awards and Recognition Lunch, Aptos

6/5 – Santa Cruz County Gay Pride Parade, downtown Santa Cruz

6/11 – Panetta Institute Leadership Seminar, campus of CSU Monterey Bay

7/8 – Democratic Century Club Luncheon, San Jose

John on the Radio
KAZU – 90.3FM
Tuesdays at 6:59p.m.

KUSP – 88.9FM
Wednesdays at 8:45a.m.

KSCO – 1080AM
Thursdays at 6:45a.m.

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